

# Informational Interview

## **What is an Informational Interview?**

It's a process of talking to someone who is presently in a job, career field and/or organization that interests you. It provides an opportunity to gather information that will help you make decisions about your career goals. Informational Interviews are most beneficial after you have a general understanding of a particular career and are interested in obtaining more in-depth information of the field.

## **How do I find someone in my field of interest to interview?**

- Ask all your friends, classmates, family members, instructors, advisors/counselors, and acquaintances if they know a person employed in the career you are researching. When you contact your prospective interviewee, mention that you were referred by a mutual friend.
- Try PCC instructors themselves. Check the PCC catalog to see if courses are taught in a field you're interested in (ie: marketing, graphic design, nursing, interior design, engineering, etc.).
- Try professionals/businesses that you or your family and friends use (ie: accountants, veterinarians, physical therapists, insurance sales rep, lawyers, small business owners, etc.)
- Try the Yellow Pages. For example, if you are looking for an architect to interview, you'll find several under "architects" in the phone book. You can call a firm, explain to the receptionist that you want to interview an architect for a class and ask her who in the firm might be willing to give you a half hour of time.

## **Here are some sample ways to introduce yourself by phone or by email:**

- "Hello. My name is Amy and I am a (friend/sister/student) of your friend Tom. I'm calling you because I am doing some research on the field of interior design and Tom suggested you might be willing to help. If you can spare about 30 minutes, I'd be really interested to ask you some questions about your work as an Interior Designer..."
- "Hello. My name is Jessica and my family has been using your veterinarian office for a number of years. I'm interested in possibly pursuing a career as a veterinarian and was wondering if I could meet with you sometime to ask a few questions about your field..."
- "Hello. My name is Mike and I am a student at PCC. I saw your ad in the Yellow Pages and thought your firm might be a good place to start. I am doing some research on the field of city planning and was wondering if someone in your firm might be able to meet with me for 20 or 25 minutes sometime to answer some questions I've written up..."

## **Before the interview**

- Learn more about the career in general so you understand the basics before meeting the person; be prepared so you don't waste their time (or yours).
- Review and get comfortable with the questions you'll be asking.

### **During the interview**

- Be mindful of the time, however, some people really enjoy talking about themselves so be prepared to stay extra if needed.
- Don't worry if your interviewee doesn't follow a specific format: they don't have to answer the questions in order.

### **Follow-up**

- Send a thank-you letter, via email or regular mail, preferably within a few days.
- Stay in touch, especially if the person expressed interest in your progress.
- If given a referral that turns out to be a gold mine of information, drop a note to the person who made the referral. People appreciate knowing when they have been helpful.

## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

1. What is your job like?  
What do you do during a typical day?  
What kinds of problems do you handle?  
What abilities and skills are required to do well in your position?  
What are other related job titles for what you do?  
What is your most significant accomplishment this past year?
2. What do you like most about your job?  
What do you find challenging?  
What do you not like about your job?  
Is your job different from how you first thought it would be? Were there any surprises?
3. What did you do to prepare for this occupation (work, activities, education, internships, etc)?  
Which have been most helpful?  
What attracted you to this type of work?
4. What changes are occurring in your occupation?  
Has technology changed your work at all?  
How competitive is it to get a job in your field?
5. How do you advance in your field?  
What are the advancement opportunities?  
If you were starting again, what, if anything, would you do differently?  
What is a typical pay range for someone entering this occupation?  
What are the names of the professional associations in this field?
6. Why do people leave this occupation?
7. What other local companies hire in this occupation?
8. What other advice do you have for a person considering this career?
9. Could you give me the name & contact information of someone else in this occupation who might be willing to talk with me about his/her career as you have done?